The Builder.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1850.

THERE are two or three matters that we find it necessary to mention, and as we have left ourselves little space, we must throw them together with more regard to brevity and the information of our readers than connection of the subjects. And touching this same *brevity*, we would urge upon some of our correspondents its great virtue and importance. The subject which occupies a writer's own mind is usually particularly interesting to him, and he would not much object if our number for that week contained nothing else. Our readers generally, however, would think very differently, and we must of course consider them. Above all things we say to our correspondents, be brief; give us facts, argument, illustrations, tersely,—but avoid verbiage and long stories, which interest only yourselves. Another thing to be noted is, that there is no occasion to abuse a man because he has the misfortune to think differently from you,—he is not necessarily an infidel or a swindler, and it is quite possible that you may change your own opinion before you die, and remain just as honest a man as you are now. A number of letters in connection with the interesting and important controversy now going on in our pages were inadmissible on this account. The question is artistic, not personal, and in no other way can it be discussed in THE BUILDER. There is bad feeling enough in the world without opening fresh sources unnecessarily.

In some cases personal reflections cannot be avoided; but even then they should be tempered by consideration and charity. And now for a case somewhat in point.

In our notice of the competition designs for baths and washhouses at Greenwich,* we expressed two opinions;—first, that we did not suppose the selected design could be carried out for the sum stipulated, viz., 5,000*l.*; and, secondly, that a set marked *Pro Bono Publico* was well arranged, and had a satisfactory aspect of completeness. We further mentioned that Mr. W. Smith, of Greenwich, had been employed professionally to assist in the selection.

Since then the referee has forwarded to us a copy of his report and the correspondence on the subject, in order that we might refute certain "unfounded reports that are being industriously circulated relative to his selection of the design for the proposed building."

It appears, although we were not aware of it at the time, that he, in his report, pointed out the set marked *Pro Bono Publico* (in red ink) as the only one he could recommend in which the instructions had been complied with. The report said the set marked "Junius" and another set marked *Pro Bono Publico*† (in black ink) had points of greater merit than the first named, but as their stated cost exceeded the stipulated sum, he did not consider himself justified in recommending either of them for adoption.*

The commissioners, however, selected the set marked "Junius," found to be by Mr. Ritchie. To refute an imputation of personal connection with the author of the plans the referee had recommended, he advertised in our journal for the name of the author, and found the design was the production of Messrs. F. and H. Francis.

It is scarcely necessary for us to say that the course he took of rejecting those designs which were not prepared in accordance with the instructions, was the only one he could adopt with justice. Whether or not the selected set cannot after all be executed for the money,—whether or not the design pointed out by him *could*, we need not now inquire: the correctness of the principle is unquestionable.

We are glad to find that the Architectural Institute for Scotland (see advertisement), to which we alluded a short time ago, is now in shape. We cordially wish it success. We understand that it has been formed on a popular basis, the architects of Edinburgh not being sufficiently united at this moment, if numerous enough, to establish such an institution, and it will now be the duty of the council to consider how a professional *status* is to be conferred, compatibly with the popular constitution of the Institute.

The subjects which are intended to fall under the consideration of the Institute embrace "everything pertaining to the history, principles, and practice of architecture; as, for example, its rise and development in ancient and mediæval times,—the facilities presented by the architecture of these times for re-combination and modern adaptation,—the exposition and illustration of the æsthetical laws which govern architecture as a fine art, and of the mechanical laws which govern it as a constructive art,—and its various resources and appliances as a branch of social economics."

The Institute will carry out its object by meetings for the reading of papers and discussion on subjects connected with architecture, by corresponding with architects and men of science at home and abroad, and by the publication of its proceedings. It will also have in view the collection of models and designs; the establishment of a library, reading-room, and museum; the endowment of a chair of architecture; and the encouragement of pupils of merit at the various Scottish schools of art.

About one-half of the architects in Edinburgh have already become members of the Institute.

Some of the leading architects maintain at present an apathetic neutrality. It is to be hoped, however, that when they see the success which has attended the Institute in other quarters, and the zeal which is thus indicated as existing among the non-professional classes for the advancement of the study of architecture and the elevation of the status of the profession itself in Scotland, they will yet give the benefit of their names and of their experience, and merge all professional jealousies and dislikes in the desire to promote the noble art which they profess.

We hear that the first donation to the library of the Scotch Institute was a complete set of "THE BUILDER." We shall take upon ourselves to add to this by presenting weekly the current number of our journal.

Apropos of the encouragement of pupils, the letter of "C. J. N.," in our last number but one, has not satisfied our pupil friends. "T. and C." have forwarded a reply, in which they refuse to admit "that the circumstance of its not being usual for architects to instruct their pupils is a sufficient reason for retaining the custom. That neglect on the part of masters," they say, "is the 'abominable system' which we call upon you to assist in abolishing. With respect to 'the contracting of bad habits,' it is doubtful whether the fault be always on the pupil's side. If 'C. J. N.' has studied Locke as deeply as he would have us believe, he will know that 'labour for labour's sake is against nature.' When pupils are set to multiply drawings merely to occupy that time which might be so much more profitably employed, either in gaining practical knowledge, or in making themselves acquainted with the numerous beauties of the public buildings of this metropolis (a course of study so strongly recommended by our eminent professor at the academy), it will not be surprising if they become careless and indifferent, not to say disgusted.

"We quite agree with the quotation with which your correspondent concludes, that 'practice must settle the habit of doing:' this contains the pith of our letter, wherein we confessed our ignorance of, and complained of the want of opportunity of seeing, the *practical* part of our profession, and in which we endeavoured to show the uselessness of theory without the aid of practice. We will, in conclusion, ask 'C. J. N.' to take *another* dip into the 'Conduct of the Understanding,' when he will learn that 'those who have particular callings ought to understand them;' and that 'it is practice alone that brings the powers of the mind to perfection.'"

There is much truth in the complaints of architects' pupils, and at the same time great force in the sensible letter by "C. J. N." We most earnestly deprecate the Pecksniffian practice pursued by some practitioners, and the thoughtlessness of others, which leads them not to give their pupils opportunities of improvement to which they are justly entitled. We must, nevertheless, urge on students the necessity of self exertion, and caution them against expecting too much. We may, perhaps, find an opportunity to return to the subject.

Through expecting too much, the workmen of the metropolis had nearly lost the advantage which we feel assured they will derive from the new "Building and Engineering Operatives' Association." The project, however, is now we believe safe, although in a more positively "benevolent" shape than was at first contemplated. A meeting was held at Exeter Hall on the 23rd, Mr. Cockerell, R.A., in the chair, when a plan was decided on, resolutions forming the society passed, and a committee appointed to carry them out.

Mr. Brunel, Sir Harry Chester, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Baker, and others, moved the resolutions; Mr. W. Cubitt, M.P., accepted the office of treasurer, and several large subscriptions were announced.

Means of obtaining the details of the scheme will of course be speedily afforded, and should receive the serious attention of all our readers.

LORD ROSSE'S SOIREE.—Lord Rosse gave his first *soirée* to the Fellows of the Royal Society, and persons distinguished by knowledge or position, on Saturday evening, the 20th.

* See page 164, *ante*.

† Why do competitors adopt mottoes so hackneyed that they no longer serve as distinctions?

* According to the instructions issued to architects, "the cost for executing the several works required for the whole establishment and fittings complete, in accordance with the designs, is limited to 5,000*l.*, *including the architect's commission, his travelling expenses, and all incidental charges*; and each person sending in designs is to be prepared (if called upon) to provide competent persons to contract for and execute the whole of such works in an *efficient* manner for the sum or sums to be stated in his specification or estimate."

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